

ROCKY MOUNT

NORTH CAROLINA

DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

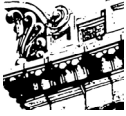


MARCH 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Executive Summary.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Why is Downtown Rocky Mount Important?	8
Plan Development	10
A Few Important Keys to Success.....	12
Sense of Place	12
Community Living Room.....	13
Public/Private Partnership	14
Drive and Fortitude for Change.....	16
Leadership and Civic Entrepreneurship.....	17
Vision for Downtown.....	18
Organization	19
Economic Restructuring	23
Design	31
Marketing and Promotion.....	36
Transportation.....	40
Appendix.....	43
Primary and Secondary Focus Areas	43-44
Tax Value	44
Catalytic Projects	45
Land Use – Existing	46
Land Use – Proposed	47
Bird’s Eye View of the Douglas Block.....	48
North Carolina A&T Students’ Concept	49
Next Steps for Implementation	51
“Track Record”	52
End Notes	58

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



AN ENVIRONMENT THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED INVITES ITS OWN DESTRUCTION. WE PREFER A WORLD THAT CAN BE MODIFIED PROGRESSIVELY AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF VALUED REMAINS, A WORLD IN WHICH ONE CAN LEAVE A PERSONAL MARK ALONGSIDE THE MARKS OF HISTORY.

— KEVIN LYNCH

The Plan sets forth the return to prominence of Downtown Rocky Mount. It is the blueprint for the implementation for Downtown Rocky Mount's revival. The downtown is special as it is the historic center of the Twin Counties of Nash and Edgecombe, the region's living room, and a tourist destination. Downtown is the antidote to urban sprawl, the foundation of smart growth, and provides incubation space for small and entrepreneurial businesses. As the health of the downtown fares, so fares the region.

The *Downtown Action Plan* envisions a mixed-use area in which to live, work, shop, and have fun. It bridges the best of the area's past with promise for the future. The plan calls for the sensitive restoration of the largely intact historic fabric of the urban core. This bricks and mortar component will be complemented by growth in community spirit and involvement as existing private stakeholders are joined by new property owners, merchants, residents, employees and other stakeholders. The plan emphasizes use of the public/private partnership paradigm. In this model, as exemplified by the Central City Revitalization Panel (CCRP), involvement of both sectors is necessary. The private sector's commitment is indispensable in actualizing the community's plans and in providing leadership and investment for the redevelopment process.

The plan for the revitalization of Downtown Rocky Mount centers around five concepts and specific goals:

ORGANIZATION

- ✧ Provide, organize, and utilize the necessary resources (people, funding, enthusiasm, expertise, and administration) to enable the successful revitalization of Downtown Rocky Mount.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

- ✧ Make Downtown Rocky Mount a successful place to live and do business, and the economic center of the region.
- ✧ Improve investor confidence in downtown and generate capital investment in downtown buildings and businesses.

DESIGN

- ✧ Create an exciting, authentic, and positive identity for Downtown Rocky Mount using historical preservation as a major focus.
- ✧ Make improvements to the center city that are attractive, functional, and capitalize on Downtown Rocky Mount's significant historic assets.

MARKETING PROMOTION

- ✧ Promote downtown as a destination for customers, workers, residents, and visitors.
- ✧ Create fun, exciting, and creative opportunities for residents and visitors to experience downtown.

TRANSPORTATION

- ✧ Provide a welcoming and safe downtown neighborhood accessible to pedestrians, cars, trains, buses, and bicycles.

The first four are program tenets of the highly successful Main Street model, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The fifth, Transportation, was added to this plan due to Rocky Mount's challenges in this arena. This plan incorporates the Main Street model and philosophy and is supplemented by the following principles:

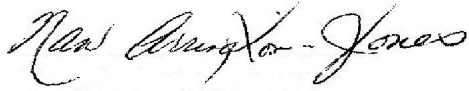
- ✧ Comprehensive view and involvement.
- ✧ Incremental progress.
- ✧ Community self-help.
- ✧ Public/private partnerships.
- ✧ Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets.
- ✧ High quality design, materials, and performance.
- ✧ Progressive change.
- ✧ Long-term and consistent action.

Through implementation of the plan and the perseverance of the public and private players, sustainable renewal of Downtown Rocky Mount will be achieved. This is the most exciting period in the last 25 years in Downtown Rocky Mount. The rebirth of an important regional central city has begun and prospects for its future are bright and limitless. We welcome and encourage citizens to leave a personal mark on our community by getting involved, contributing and making the Action Plan a reality.

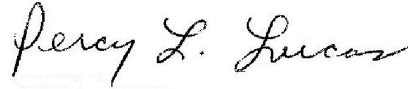
CENTRAL CITY REVITALIZATION PANEL



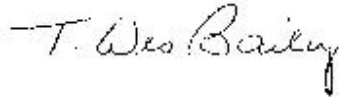
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Nan Arrington-Jones



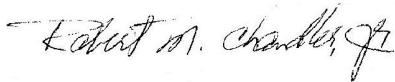
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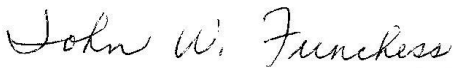
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A PROJECT OF THE CITY OF ROCKY MOUNT'S CENTRAL CITY REVITALIZATION PANEL

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With support from City Council; Steve Raper, City Manager; Historic Resources Commission; Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager; Adelia Ramey, Planner, Rudolph Knight, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning Division, Planning & Development Department, Community Development Division, Planning & Development Department; Bernetta Smith-Battle, Administrative Assistant.

With thanks to the many advocates of Downtown Rocky Mount who keep hope alive that downtown will be transformed into a vibrant city center.



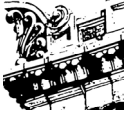
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THEREFORE, WHEN WE BUILD, LET US THINK THAT WE BUILD FOREVER. LET IT NOT BE FOR PRESENT DELIGHT, NOR FOR PRESENT USE ALONE; LET IT BE SUCH WORK AS OUR DESCENDANTS WILL THANK US FOR, AND LET US THINK, AS WE LAY STONE ON STONE, THAT A TIME IS TO COME WHEN THOSE STONES WILL BE HELD SACRED BECAUSE OUR HANDS HAVE TOUCHED THEM, AND THAT MEN WILL SAY AS THEY LOOK UPON THE LABOR AND WROUGHT SUBSTANCE OF THEM, "SEE! THIS OUR FATHERS DID FOR US."

— JOHN RUSKIN

INTRODUCTION



MAKE NO LITTLE PLANS. THEY HAVE NO MAGIC TO STIR MEN'S BLOOD AND PROBABLY THEMSELVES WILL NOT BE REALIZED. MAKE BIG PLANS; AIM HIGH IN HOPE AND WORK, REMEMBERING THAT A NOBLE, LOGICAL DIAGRAM ONCE RECORDED WILL NEVER DIE, BUT LONG AFTER WE ARE GONE WILL BE A LIVING THING, ASSERTING ITSELF WITH EVER-GROWING INSISTENCY. REMEMBER THAT OUR SONS AND GRANDSONS ARE GOING TO DO THINGS THAT WOULD STAGGER US. LET YOUR WATCHWORD BE ORDER AND YOUR BEACON BEAUTY. THINK BIG.

— DANIEL BURNHAM

Downtown Rocky Mount is the largest urban core in the two counties it overspreads, and for some 50 miles in all directions. Once the very active commercial center of the region, it now is underutilized and fairly quiet, except for the numerous trains that roll along the county lines. Once the crossroads of traffic traversing eastern North Carolina, through-traffic is now 1.5 miles north of downtown on U.S. Highway 64. Once the hub of customers accessing jam-packed shops, restaurants, and offices, it now longs for the bustle of days gone by. Once the site where three of the major industries of Rocky Mount came together – tobacco, rail, and textiles – now downtown is a liability in industrial recruitment.

This reality is in the midst of transformation. There is a renewed understanding about the importance of Downtown Rocky Mount to the future of the City and the region. There is a growing appreciation for the excellent and important historic resources still standing downtown. And perhaps most importantly, there is a growing cadre of determined and energetic advocates and leaders working for a revitalized downtown. These leaders recognize that time is of the essence; steps *must* be taken *now* to rebuild the infrastructure physically and socially or risk the loss of the historic center of Rocky Mount forever. Carefully and methodically, these leaders from the private and public sectors are laying the foundation for a successful downtown turn around.

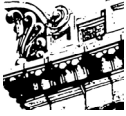
The Action Plan is the blueprint of that foundation. Its purpose is to articulate a comprehensive and straightforward plan for successfully jump-starting revitalization in Downtown Rocky Mount. The plan contains a limited and important set of steps necessary to lay the foundation and rebuild the vitality of the center city. The presence of a plan that is universally acknowledged and embraced is fundamental to successful redevelopment. The many builders involved must have the same end-product in mind and use the same set of blueprints to get there.

Since Rocky Mount is a North Carolina Main Street City, the well-tested Main Street Model of the National Trust for Historic Preservation is applied. Chapters devoted to the four Main Street building blocks are included: ①Economic Restructuring, ②Design, ③Marketing/Promotion, and ④Organization. A chapter on ⑤Transportation is found as well, due to Rocky Mount's significant needs in that area.

This document is calculated, smart, customized, and comprehensive. It is calculated in its limited set of strategies in each chapter and straightforward in its light-on-text approach. It is smart as it draws on proven approaches, previous plans and research. It is customized by its design specific to Rocky Mount at this time in its history, given the current economy and other realities. It is comprehensive by the inclusion of the entire smart growth area, all of the Main Street points, and the integrated, inclusive nature of the strategies. The plan is *by* Rocky Mount *for* Rocky Mount.

This Action Plan connects a myriad of ideas, hopes, needs, expectations, and steps into a blueprint that addresses chronic, resistant issues that have previously not been overcome. The time has arrived for moving from ideas to action. This plan explains how.

WHY IS DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT IMPORTANT?



THERE ARE, CERTAINLY, AMPLE REASONS FOR REDOING DOWNTOWN — FALLING RETAIL SALES, TAX BASES IN JEOPARDY, STAGNANT REAL ESTATE VALUES... IT IS MORE TO THE POINT TO CONSIDER... WHAT MAKES A CITY CENTER MAGNETIC, WHAT CAN INJECT GAIETY, THE WONDER, THE CHEERFUL HURLY-BURLY THAT MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO COME INTO THE CITY AND TO LINGER THERE. FOR MAGNETISM IS THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM... TO CREATE IN IT (DOWNTOWN) AN ATMOSPHERE OF URBANITY AND EXUBERANCE IS NOT A FRIVOLOUS AIM.

— JANE JACOBS

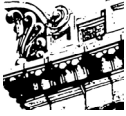
Prior to explaining “how,” it is critical to understand “why” this major undertaking must be tackled – and be successful. For the past number of months, a community education program explained the rationale for downtown revitalization. Telling the story is the first step toward revitalization: building collective support. Everyone must understand the rationale in order to share a unified vision for downtown. This story must be told and retold until the themes catch the imagination of everyone. The following points form the basis of that argument:

1. Downtown Rocky Mount is the center of Nash and Edgecombe Counties;
2. Downtown Rocky Mount serves as the living room for Rocky Mount and the two counties;
3. Downtown Rocky Mount is the only impression over 750,000 travelers have of Rocky Mount as they pass through our community on Amtrak;
4. Downtown Rocky Mount possesses great history of how these counties developed;
5. Downtown Rocky Mount is on the National Register of Historic Places;
6. Rocky Mount is the home or birthplace of some famous individuals, such as: jazzman Thelonious Monk; bandleader Kay Kaiser; baseball Hall of Famer Buck Leonard; basketball All-American Phil Ford; three-sport star Danny Talbott; basketball star Buck Williams; North Carolina Governor Michael Easley; North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper; Wachovia Bank CEO Ken Thompson; author Allan Gurganus; JP Morgan Chase CEO William Harrison; Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker, and others. Significant events in their lives took place downtown;
7. Downtown Rocky Mount is important for industrial recruitment and other types of development – prospects want to visit the city center when visiting our community with the thought of relocating a plant to either county;
8. Downtown Rocky Mount density reduces sprawl and promotes smart growth;

9. Downtown Rocky Mount increases and expands the value of the tax base for local governments. When commercial buildings carry their full weight, this reduces the tax burden on residential properties;
10. Downtown Rocky Mount strengthens the tourism profile and draw for the City, the counties, and the region;
11. Downtown Rocky Mount provides incubation space for small and entrepreneurial businesses; and
12. Downtown Rocky Mount is what makes Rocky Mount unique and different from any other city or town.

These dozen points are justification and bright beacons for pursuing an aggressive, well-conceived downtown revitalization plan.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT



THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD ARE THE ONES WHO DO.

—APPLE COMPUTER

This Action Plan builds on previous research as well as past and present plans. Strategies promoted in this Downtown Action Plan respond to data and realities discovered therein. This is especially true for the economic restructuring program.

Over the years Rocky Mount has produced a number of plans specifically targeting the downtown. These products, extending back as far as 1967, were reviewed. Studies considered include *A Proposal for Progress* (Division of Community Planning) 1967; the *Downtown Plan 1982/1984* (Barton-Aschman); *Downtown Action Agenda* (Hyett-Palma) 1990; and the *Analysis of Existing and Projected Land Use* (Coastal Plains Consulting) 2002. Most notably, the assessment by the Resource Team from North Carolina Main Street in November 2002 was carefully reviewed. Perspectives and strategies expressed in that report were selectively integrated in this plan. A vision statement written with input from 125 participants in an August 2002 session led by Rodney Swink of the North Carolina Main Street Center prior to the Resource Team visit was also considered.

The Action Plan is the logical outgrowth of the City of Rocky Mount's 2003 Comprehensive Plan, entitled *Together Tomorrow*. That Plan calls for a downtown Master Plan. While some work was performed on a Master Plan, after a number of months a product was not forthcoming. That situation led to the decision to produce a strategic, action-oriented plan in order to accelerate the revitalization process. Work developed for the Master Plan was useful in building this more focused document.

Once the decision was made to produce a strategic action plan, an abbreviated planning process was employed. Work by Downtown Rocky Mount volunteers pointed the way. Staff researched literature on proven practices and reviewed plans from successful downtowns. Early in 2004, a gathering of downtown merchants, advocates, property owners, and community leaders was held. Its purpose was to compress and sharpen the previously developed vision statement, determine goals, and get input on strategies. A couple of small groups met following the event and developed their plans in more detail. All these products were integrated into the Action Plan and applied to Rocky Mount's situation.

While the plan was in development, graduate landscape architecture students from NCA&T University and their professor, Perry Howard, completed their semester-long study of Downtown Rocky Mount. In December 2003 they presented their extensive findings and drawings to the downtown community and the City of Rocky Mount. Their excellent ideas and insights provided a backdrop for the Plan. (See Maps section for an example of their study.)

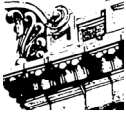
Staff took the work of volunteers, previous downtown research and plans, their own knowledge, and recent research, and integrated and more fully developed them. The CCRP provided oversight and feedback during plan development. Staff agreed to create a chapter (goals and strategies) a month and bring them before the Panel for consideration. This format was employed for the last several months. Each set of goals and strategies were reviewed by appropriate staff and Panel members. Adjustments were made as requested and the plans resubmitted to the Panel.

In addition to reviewing the chapters, the Panel devised and decided upon targeted boundaries for various types of downtown initiatives. Called the Primary and Secondary Focus Areas, the boundaries prioritize resources, attention, and phasing in of projects. (Please see pages 43 and 44 for an explanation and maps of the Focus Areas.)

Two other important maps were developed by Planning Department staff. One describes the existing use of downtown land and buildings. The other is projected land use. Inclusion of this information provides a 2004 benchmark as use evolves over time.

These steps provided a deliberate yet compressed planning process for the Action Plan. In the pages that follow an exciting and practical blueprint for revitalization and enhancement of the downtown is described.

A FEW IMPORTANT KEYS TO SUCCESS



THE SECRET OF ALL THOSE WHO MAKE DISCOVERIES IS THAT THEY REGARD NOTHING AS IMPOSSIBLE.

— JUSTIS LIEBIG

THE ONLY LIMIT TO OUR REALIZATION OF TOMORROW WILL BE OUR DOUBTS OF TODAY.

— FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

As the Action Plan is implemented, a select number of overarching, subtle concepts become important. They span the four Main Street arenas, tying them together. Attention to these keys to success will pay big dividends.

SENSE OF PLACE

Communities all across America and eastern North Carolina are endangered – endangered of becoming *nowhere* and *everywhere* communities – so bland and similar that all personality is drained away. The devolution of our communities to automobiles and suburbanization has had irreversible, negative effects. Big box retailers are killing many locally owned small retailers and having a homogenizing effect on American commerce. Some communities are franchising and malling/mauling themselves into brand-name obscurity. Downtowns are the perfect antidote to arrest and reverse this phenomenon. Unless communities consciously and conscientiously work to preserve their character, it will erode away steadily and subtly. If civic leaders and citizens are not careful, distinctive places such as Rocky Mount’s center city will become only vague memories of the historic past. Evidence of this progression is already visible.

In *Healthy Rural Communities – A Resource and Action Guide for North Carolina* by the North Carolina Smart Growth Alliance, “sense of place” is described this way:

In general, a sense of place has to do with the interaction of three elements – location, landscape, and personal involvement; each by itself usually is insufficient to create a sense of place. Why does place matter? Place shapes who we are and what we will become. A sense of place provides sense of belonging and of commitment. It is the repository for our shared memories, experiences, and dreams. It is a place of family and community ties – of roots – that stems

from our connection to a particular location and its people. And when people feel connected to a place – emotionally, culturally, and spiritually – they are more apt to care for it.

Is it a coincidence that downtowns, including Downtown Rocky Mount, are where sense of place is most profound? Not hardly! It makes sense – downtown is the historic heart of the community. It is where the greatest concentration of historic assets reside, where generations hold fond memories, where features, unique from any other city in North Carolina, abound. The railroad track... the tobacco warehouses... the train depot... the linear, intact stretch of buildings lining the track... the by-gone days of bustling commerce... the close-in neighborhoods, and many other features delineate Rocky Mount's downtown. Preservation and recapturing of these assets is essential for retaining Rocky Mount's distinctive nature.

Preservation of these historic assets is sound economic development that also strengthens community character, commerce, personality, and appearance. Recapturing and establishing sense of place is smart economics.

What type of image and identity does Rocky Mount choose to create? Investors, business prospects, tourists, and residents routinely judge a community by its outward appearance. As some 750,000 Amtrak riders pass through Rocky Mount each year, what impression do they take with them? Often a community's outward appearance is indicative of its social, economic, political, spiritual, cultural, and governmental climate and vigor. Just any appearance will not do, however. The image must be positive, authentic, and uniquely Rocky Mount.

In addition, a standard of simple quality must be embraced. Litter, dirty windows, out-of-place signage, forgotten debris, and neglected plantings all detract from one's intrinsic feeling about a community. An ethic of sensitivity and respect toward community environment, landscape, beauty, and character must be actively applied. Research tells us that the quality of the built and natural environment has a direct effect on behavior. As Winston Churchill said, "We shape our buildings and our buildings shape us." Communities who care about their long-term future care about how their town "feels" to others and, therefore, embrace quality improvements in the heart of the community.

COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM

Central business districts, downtowns, are often referred to as the civic intersection of "community" and "place" – the space where the common life is lived. As an extension of this concept, the center city is often called the "living room of the community." Or as Council Member Chris Miller said recently, "Main Street... the ties that bind." These metaphors provide graphic images that articulate this blend of "community" and "place."

Living rooms are public spaces; they are expressions of the corporate; they are decorated with the public in mind. Living rooms are for living – socializing, entertaining, conviviality, and negotiating. Living rooms and central business districts are both reflective of the community– a group of people of all types living under the same governing structure in the same locality; and place – a location of experience. Downtowns filled with mixed uses, such as residential, civic, office, art/culture, worship, and retail attract a diverse public. This quality, central location of experience provides security, focus, and ballast to any community. Downtown Rocky Mount must once again become the living room of the community. The plan provides the ideas.

The downtown should be cared for as if it is the living room of a home. Attention to detail, positioning of “furniture,” provision of people comforts, use of color, and happy, smiling faces all make downtowns appealing. Desirable downtowns are expressions of the unique qualities of the location, are visually enticing, have a variety of “happening” activities and uses, and are functional. All people should feel welcome and comfortable in the community’s living room. Research reveals that the application of these characteristics in center cities has a direct correlation to good public behavior, reinvestment, low criminal activity, social civility and community pride. The quality of the environmental context is a determinant of Rocky Mount’s appeal.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Revitalization of Downtown Rocky Mount is dependent on a healthy relationship among and between the elements of the public sector and private sector. This unique location, downtown, is where these two civic components intersect vividly. The public sector – the City of Rocky Mount, Edgecombe County, Nash County and an array of not-for-profit organizations – provide the proper business and civic climate and vital, egalitarian, all-purpose services to the downtown community. The private sector – investors, property owners, merchants, for-profit ventures of nonprofit organizations, entrepreneurs, and others – provide the spark that fuels the economic engine over time and transforms market dynamics.

The central business district is unique among neighborhoods in the City. Layers upon layers of services, a concentration of history, and an abundance of uses take place within this dense, urban boundary. Downtown is also unique in that it is *everybody's neighborhood*. This environment engenders a special relationship between the private and governmental sectors, different from other parts of the City. How important services are delivered and accessed in this urban core must be specifically designed. Typically, in North Carolina cities offer certain services customized to this district, such as administration/ management, street lighting, parking, planning, security, solid waste management, storm water management, street cleaning, and festivals and events. The City, as provider, determines the method, level, and intensity of these services. Private businesses, entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations share responsibility for downtown. They are expected to maintain their buildings, clean up their

properties, and observe applicable public policies. The manner in which the services are provided is important to both sectors. To insure functionality, from time-to-time it is important for the various stakeholders to discuss how the provision of these services is working. This is one advantage of having a merchants/business association; they can speak with one voice to the needs of the private sector in this unique space. If services are not provided adequately, the private sector can prevail upon City government to improve them or develop alternate methods for their provision and cost. As center cities are dynamic spaces, it is impossible to anticipate ahead of time all the needs and services for downtown. For that reason maintaining a good working relationship between the sectors is paramount.

One sector without the other just cannot do it. These complementary roles are interlocking brickwork of the solid foundation that is described in this plan and extended through implementation. Over the years the City of Rocky Mount has invested millions of dollars in civic amenities such as the Imperial Centre and the Train Depot. Property owners contributed to the municipal tax district, paying for underground utilities that enhance the public good. More of these type investments will be needed in the future to improve streetscape, infrastructure and appearance.

One part of this equation, however, has not been particularly strong in Downtown Rocky Mount over the last couple of decades. That missing element is significant investment by the private sector in downtown properties. Most of the built environment in the center city has been allowed to deteriorate – this lapse shows in the exterior face of the buildings and in interiors unfit for modern commercial uses. For Rocky Mount's downtown to thrive once again, significant private reinvestment in downtown real estate must occur. Patch, patch, patch and paint, paint, paint will not get it. Entrepreneurial and commercial investment in new small businesses to occupy rehabilitated space is also needed. Private investors, banks, and property owners must invest and assume risk at a level commensurate with the required turn around. City funds are not appropriate for improving private property, except in occasional, unusual circumstances as in a redevelopment area. Downtown Rocky Mount will not come alive again, and sustain vitality, without a public/ private partnership and a major infusion of private dollars.

DRIVE AND FORTITUDE FOR CHANGE

In reviewing past plans, initiatives, and studies about Downtown Rocky Mount, an observation emerged. The proposals lacked traction or staying power. No plan, including this one, regardless of how well-conceived, can engender the transformation envisioned without the drive, fortitude, patience, and commitment of a legion of supporters. The downward slide of the downtown took at least 20 years; it will take a decade or more to reverse the effects of the slide. Advocates, investors, owners, public officials, residents, and supporters must be dedicated to the work for the long haul. It will not be easy. Social change generates conflict and chaos, the messy hallmarks of progress. For this reason, enthusiasm, commitment, and energy become precious, required commodities in the revitalization business.

An important step in successful community development is building and engaging the collective will of the community. This process takes many forms. General consensus must exist that revitalization is a top community goal. Political leadership must lead the way. Public/private support must be focused in the same direction. Community education is necessary. New patterns of organization, fresh creative ideas, and energetic leaders and volunteers must be encouraged. At the same time, there must be continuity of leaders over time.

Facilitation of positive social and economic change is difficult, frustrating and somewhat hazardous at times. Reversing natural forces of apathy and decay takes energy, drive and fortitude. It must be perceived as “worth it.” As Daryl Conner says in his book, *Leading at the Edge of Chaos*:

People and organizations develop the resolve to change when they recognize that the change is truly a business imperative. In these situations the issue is not *will* the necessary commitment to act be generated, but *when*. Pain and remedy are two prerequisites for successful organizational change. The pain referred to here is the critical mass of discomfort associated with staying in the *status quo*; it justifies suffering through the transition state while moving toward the desired state... To sustain change, pain and remedies must work together to create the desired outcome.¹

This Action Plan describes the pain and offers remedies for Downtown Rocky Mount.

The change process requires that a series of right steps must be repeated over and over and over: partners are brought and kept at the table; this Plan is implemented and refined; the community is informed as the process evolves; decisions are made in a rational way using best practices solutions; and resources are generated to implement the Plan. Organizations and committees must experience short-term victories, make long-term plans, and persevere until long-term plans turn into lasting legacies.

LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Closely linked to drive and fortitude is leadership. Sustaining an intentional redevelopment process requires smart, fair, attentive, collaborative, innovative, hard working leaders over the life of the initiative. These leaders must set the example and pace for the community. For them, the vision must be more important than the *status quo*, racial differences, and other projects. If leaders exhibit the behaviors required, the community will follow.

To be successful at downtown development, creative leaders and risk takers are essential. Risk takers who start and grow small businesses in the downtown are critical to success, to be sure. Another new type of risk taker is also needed – the civic entrepreneur. Civic entrepreneurs are from both the private and public sectors. They get the job done. They trudge on and persevere and are not afraid of failure. They consider thoroughly all the options, pick the best one, go for it, and then modify along they way. They are courageous, visionary and faithful, all stemming from deep convictions. Civic entrepreneurs ignore thoughts and comments such as, “We can’t do it,” “We’ve never done it that way,” and “Well, let’s just sit back and see if they can pull this off.” Civic entrepreneurs are...

...catalysts who help communities go through the change process. They build economic community – tight, resilient linkages between community and economic interests for mutual benefit. [They] forge the ties that bind economy and community for mutual benefit. They are passionate and energetic. They bring out the best in other people and know how to encourage them along... Civic entrepreneurs are doing nothing less than redefining a new type of business – government relationship, a new type of community.³

Civic entrepreneurs are absolutely vital for community visions to come into reality. Change will not happen without them. Three years from now when Rocky Mount looks back to assess its progress on downtown revitalization, what will it see? That depends on civic entrepreneurs who have stepped up, worked hard together, resolved differences, accomplished projects, learned continuously, and taught others.

5 COMMON TRAITS OF CIVIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP²

1. SEE OPPORTUNITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY.
2. POSSESS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSONALITY.
3. PROVIDE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP TO CONNECT THE ECONOMY AND THE COMMUNITY.
4. ARE MOTIVATED BY BROAD, ENLIGHTENED, LONG-TERM INTERESTS.
5. WORK IN TEAMS, PLAYING COMPLEMENTARY ROLES.



HOW MANY IDEAS HAVE THERE BEEN IN THE HISTORY OF MAN WHICH WERE UNTHINKABLE TEN YEARS BEFORE THEY APPEARED?

– FATHER ZOSSIMA’S QUOTE BY FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

VISION STATEMENT

A THRIVING, SAFE CITY CENTER
THAT PRESERVES HISTORIC,
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
ASSETS, PROMOTES
ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL
VITALITY AND DIVERSITY, AND IS
A LOCATION OF CHOICE TO
LIVE, WORK, VISIT, AND ENJOY.

Adopted March 2004

Every plan begins with hope and determination that a situation can be better. Plans point the way to a different future. But... what future? To understand, this different future must be described. A written statement gives many players from various perspectives and backgrounds with diverse expectations a sense of the destination.

This need for a unified vision or sense of the future is particularly true for downtown redevelopment. Current conditions and the diversity of downtown stakeholders make the

need for a unified sense of the end product particularly acute. It is difficult to work *together* with no idea or conflicting ideas of what it will be like when we get there.

In March 2004, a group of stakeholders agreed on a vision statement for Downtown Rocky Mount. They used a previously developed page-long statement as a reference. They talked to one another about their hopes and dreams for a transformed Rocky Mount of the future. Eventually, they agreed upon the set of words shown above as the statement that most clearly and succinctly described where they hope Downtown Rocky Mount will be in the next 20 years or so.

This set of words provided guidance on the subsequent writing of goals and strategies for this plan. This statement will stimulate interest in downtown as people catch the dream. In fact, it already has. When citizens ask, "What are you trying to accomplish downtown?" a unified, immediate answer is available. This is the launching point of conversation and action – the vision.



THE IDEA IS TO SEEK A VISION THAT GIVES YOU A PURPOSE IN LIFE AND THEN TO IMPLEMENT THAT VISION. THE VISION ITSELF IS ONE HALF, ONE PART, OF A PROCESS. IT IMPLIES THE NECESSITY OF LIVING THAT VISION, OTHERWISE THE VISION WILL SINK BACK INTO ITSELF.

—LEWIS P. JOHNSON

ORGANIZATION

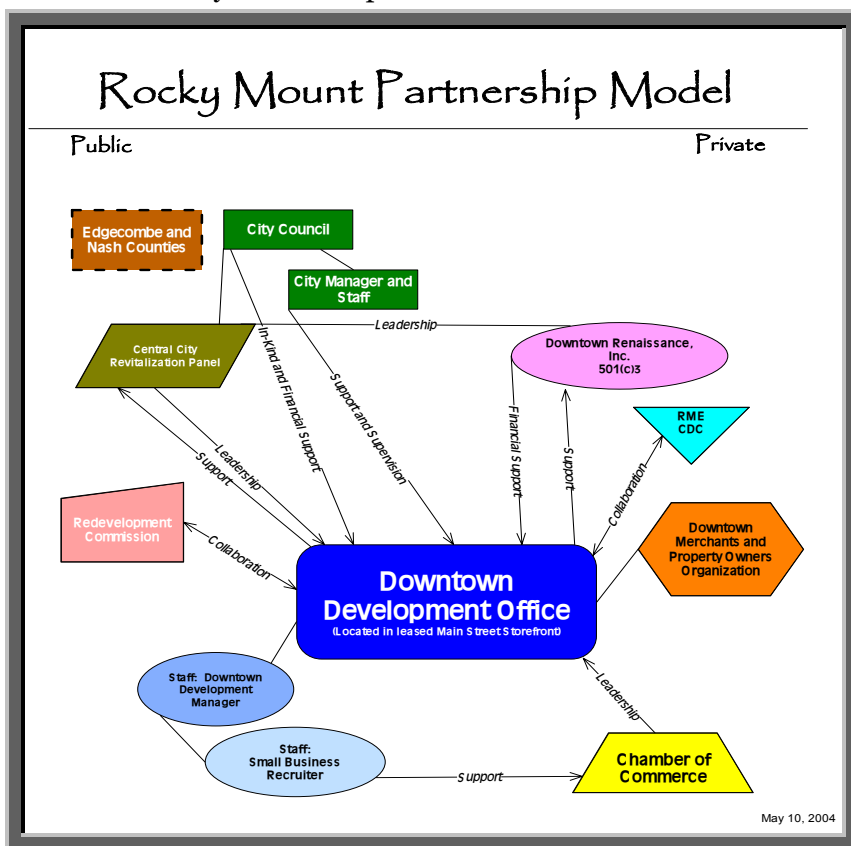


WHAT MAKES A PLAN CAPABLE OF PRODUCING RESULTS IS THE COMMITMENT OF KEY PEOPLE TO WORK ON SPECIFIC TASKS.

— PETER F. DRUCKER

A plan must be implemented to be effective. Significant community change of the magnitude required here cannot be treated as business as usual. Implementation requires adjusted and proper organization, structure and discipline as never before. It also requires tolerance and acceptance of being in the struggle between order and chaos.

Organization is probably the least understood yet most important element of the downtown revitalization process. It is not as visible as other elements, such as public art, renovation of older buildings, festivals, construction of sidewalks and walking trails. Thus it is easy for communities to overlook organization in an effort to move quickly to the more showy aspects of revitalization. However, organization is the backbone of the revitalization process. It provides the social infrastructure for revitalization — for ensuring projects get done, efforts are coordinated, and funding is secured. Organization is the social personality of downtown's sense of place. For Rocky Mount to effectively implement this plan, proper organization and structure must be in place.



In the past Rocky Mount has manufactured plans, yet failed to build a sustainable human infrastructure to implement the plans. The Main Street model overtly addresses this common problem. The National Main Street Program requires a paid professional manager, a

working Board, funding, and other support to ensure the work is accomplished over time. This plan acknowledges that requirement and articulates a series of relationships, motivators, resources, and planning activities that lay the proper foundation for success. This foundation includes a large, diverse group of volunteers and organizations engaged in the process. The accompanying diagram describes the recommended human infrastructure. Carefully nurtured relationships and partnership are perhaps *the* cornerstone of success.

The organization-related strategies in this Plan build on previous projects and achievements in Downtown Rocky Mount. In the past year and a half, a concerted effort was expended to position the downtown for a burst of activity. We learned from the past and focused on putting the building blocks of organization in place. This ensures that the community assessment and important initiatives will not be forgotten, but will become a catalyst for downtown revitalization. The downtown manager and the CCRP will have the primary responsibility for implementation and should keep the community continually aware, not only of work to be done, but of accomplishments achieved. This will foster a sense of excitement and enthusiasm that will grow as the community begins to see good things happening.

ORGANIZATION GOAL AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

PROVIDE, ORGANIZE, AND UTILIZE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES (PEOPLE, FUNDING, ENTHUSIASM, EXPERTISE, AND ADMINISTRATION) TO ENABLE THE SUCCESSFUL REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT.

STRATEGIES

MOMENTUM

- ✧ Publish vision/revitalization concept piece that explains the tangible, realistic, and compelling priorities for downtown, using visuals and words.
- ✧ Involve a volunteer corps in all aspects of revitalization. Mobilize as large a constituency as possible.
- ✧ Provide speakers, field trips, and other educational and inspirational opportunities to keep the focus, energy, and knowledge flowing.
- ✧ Tell the downtown story and rationale consistently, positively, and extensively.
- ✧ Recognize the work of exceptional volunteers with an awards program.
- ✧ Communicate consistently with the downtown community regarding issues, accomplishments, and progress.

- ✧ Convene an informational meeting of young, emerging leaders to tell the downtown story and begin to enlist their involvement, commitment, and leadership.
- ✧ Celebrate the completion of projects and other achievements.

FUNDING

- ✧ Expect the Panel and Downtown Renaissance, Inc. to generate funding to support the downtown office and program.
- ✧ Get the Central City Revitalization Panel involved in shaping and reviewing the City's budget regarding downtown.

LEADERSHIP/TEAMWORK

- ✧ Reposition the Central City Revitalization Panel to be a federation type model. Create a charter for the Panel. Specify seats for certain stakeholder groups, including Rocky Mount/Edgecombe Community Development Corp., Downtown Renaissance, Inc., Historic Preservation Commission, Redevelopment Commission, downtown merchants, and property owners, etc. Consolidate the leadership in the Panel. Add committees to the structure.
- ✧ Involve the Panel in the development of the City's budget for downtown.
- ✧ Give the Panel the tools and information to monitor progress in the downtown against the strategic plan.
- ✧ Create a downtown team composed of City of Rocky Mount staff, including Public Works, Parks & Recreation, Small Business Recruiter, Planning, Utilities, Police, Fire, Assistant City Manager, and Downtown Development Office. Ensure that all city departments are held accountable for timely, quality, creative outcomes for downtown.
- ✧ Organize and support a committee or organization of downtown business and property owners. Work on issues *they* deem important.
- ✧ Adjust the priorities of the Small Business Recruiter position to focus much more heavily on downtown. Ensure the Downtown Manager and Small Business Recruiter work together closely.

DOWNTOWN OFFICE

- ✧ Move the downtown office to a storefront location in the near future.
- ✧ Move the Downtown Manager into the central, leadership position, servicing both public and private sectors. Hold the Manager accountable for outcomes in both sectors.

PLANNING

- ✧ Create one, united strategic plan (more focused and action-oriented than a Master Plan) and annual work plans that unify the efforts of all groups, including the Central City Downtown Panel, City Planning Department, Downtown Renaissance, Small Business Recruiter, Downtown Manager's office, and the downtown efforts of Rocky Mount Edgecombe Community Development Corporation (RMECDC), Preservation Rocky

Mount, and the Historic Preservation Commission. Assign projects and elements of the plan to stakeholder groups.

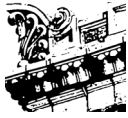
- ✧ Align intent and priorities in City of Rocky Mount planning documents and studies, *i.e.*, Comprehensive Plan, Analysis of Existing and Projected Land Use Mix, Resource Team Report, Work Plans, Master Plan, Small Business Recruitment Program Evaluation, etc.
- ✧ Use the vision statement as a unifying element and constant reminder of where you are going together.
- ✧ Implement fully the Main Street program and concepts, adapting it to Rocky Mount's size, situation and realities.



IT HAD LONG SINCE COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT PEOPLE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT RARELY SAT BACK AND LET THINGS HAPPEN TO THEM. THEY WENT OUT AND HAPPENED TO THINGS.

— ELINOR SMITH

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE, WITH A COMMUNITY OR A FAMILY, IS NOT LOSS OF FREEDOM. IT IS GROWTH TOWARD MATURITY. IN FACT, IT IS THE ULTIMATE FREEDOM: TO SHARE OUR OWN FUTURE, DISCOVER A VIABLE LIVELIHOOD, APPRECIATE OUR ASSETS.

— WILMA DYKEMAN

Economic restructuring is about change – stimulating and exploiting market and social forces to reconfigure how economics work within a certain geographic location. It is a process of tinkering with the economic building blocks of the district to bring a different and better value to taxpayers, business owners, property owners and other investors. The purpose of economic restructuring is to create a business environment that brings financial return through proactive programs, climate, and projects; its emphasis is on self-reliance and using the dynamics of the marketplace to the downtown’s benefit. Economic restructuring is multi-faceted. It is about new and expanding businesses, repositioned real estate, governmental support, unique residential, seized business opportunities, improved appearance, civic amenities, increased property values, and better quality of life.

Players in the market seek a return on investment. To play downtown, they must perceive a “downtown advantage.” This advantage can take many forms: cheaper capital, easier permitting processes, tax advantages, favorable payback terms, inexpensive real estate, financial incentives, available market research, investment by the public sector, marketing distinctions against competition, and even the “cachet” of downtown. Advocates of downtown can structure these advantages in ways that will attract interest and investment. Research is important so that advocates know the market and investors understand there are viable end uses for their investments.

The time is ripe and right for the resurgence and redevelopment of Downtown Rocky Mount. Several indicators point to this readiness. They are (in no particular order):

- ❖ Prospective living spaces unique in the market.
- ❖ Supportive City Council and City administration.
- ❖ Restoration of the Train Station at the south end of downtown.
- ❖ Successful, similar projects in nearby towns such as Wake Forest, Wilson and Tarboro.
- ❖ Growing understanding by the community's leadership about the importance of downtown.
- ❖ Data from market studies (*Analysis of Existing and Projected Land Use Mix* by Coastal Plans Consulting [2002] and *Background Demographics/Economic Redevelopment*

Plan by Clarion Associates [2004]) indicating business opportunities in specific sectors and clusters.

- ✧ Completion of the Imperial Centre in 2006 providing new cultural resources for children and their families and in the performing and visual arts over.
- ✧ Passage of over 750,000 travelers per year through downtown on Amtrak.
- ✧ Completion of the Redevelopment Plan for the Douglas Block that describes economic development opportunities in that neighborhood.
- ✧ Recently completed Braswell Memorial Library located at the north end of downtown.
- ✧ Good, underutilized, historic building stock.
- ✧ Appetite of the market for restaurants, retail, and entertainment that is unique, interesting, and different.
- ✧ Intact, linear collection of 19th and 20th century buildings.
- ✧ Strong local history.
- ✧ Close proximity of downtown to I-95 and Highway 64.
- ✧ Economic trend toward individually owned small businesses.
- ✧ Downtown's designation as a National Historic District and its tax credit implications.
- ✧ Availability of small spaces ideal for start-up and entrepreneurial businesses.
- ✧ Compatibility of web-based businesses with downtown opportunities.
- ✧ Success of the Harambee Square project by RMECDC.
- ✧ Availability of incentives and tools for building rehabilitation and business development. (See page 29)
- ✧ Existing presence of viable businesses downtown.
- ✧ Presence of Edgcombe Community College in the downtown.

This long and impressive set of downtown advantages is the secret to expected success in Downtown Rocky Mount over the next few years. Barriers and obstacles to development exist, but now the advantages are optimal. The momentum and time are right for renaissance.

One particular downtown advantage in successful redevelopment is civic power – many community forces pulling together to make things happen and to pool resources. This power comes from all three sectors of the economy – public, private, and nonprofit –working the Action Plan and sharing the vision. This joining of forces and intent generates a mighty civic energy that is unleashed. Each sector is involved because they perceive a specific benefit. The private sector interest arises from perceived profit, marketability, location, and smart application of resources. The public sector foresees community improvement advantages supported by a stronger tax base. And the nonprofit sector sees an opportunity to improve the social and cultural conditions of the community. This focused muscle of civic energy is exciting and can set Downtown Rocky Mount apart from competing communities and commercial locations.

Creating this advantage, the “investor ready climate,” can be the ticket for the new economy downtown. For investors with patient money who understand the central role of downtown in economic development, this climate is attractive. For entrepreneurs with ideas, downtown buildings with small footprints are great incubators. For property owners with an underutilized building, this momentum and climate signals it is time to reinvest, use tax credits, or release ownership. For business owners seeking a unique location, downtown provides an incomparable environment. For residents the offerings in retail, restaurants, and housing types are expanded and more interesting. For existing businesses, this new, favorable climate sends the signal that now may be the time to make an expansion move. For the City of Rocky Mount, to improve its tax base while assisting economic development is *the* golden opportunity.

“Growing your own” is the best type of economic development. Small businesses often are owner-operated which tend to recycle money back into the community. Enabling an existing business to expand or encouraging incremental growth of a new business is the most cost effective and sustainable type of growth. Each dollar of sales revenue and each job created costs far less than industrial relocations since no incentives have been paid by State or local governments to generate the impact. In industrial recruitment, outsiders typically take the higher paying jobs. Often, profits and some wages of “branch plant” businesses leave the local economy. However, in the small business arena, the majority of dollars generated are retained within the local community in the form of salaries, purchases, wealth creation and new assets. They also support the community by being a direct participant in the life of the community – schools, faith organizations, and civic organizations. Expansion of existing and homegrown businesses is the fastest and most effective generator of economic restructuring. The plan describes strategies to encourage this outcome.

Regional economic development and the revival of Downtown Rocky Mount are inextricably linked. During the development of this Plan, numerous stories were told about developers and industrial clients who declined to locate in Rocky Mount due to the condition and negligible vitality of the downtown. With the economic conditions of today and competition so fierce, Rocky Mount and the region must eliminate their hindering or disadvantageous factors. Right now, Downtown Rocky Mount does not “show well.” Rocky Mount leaders must ask: “What does Downtown Rocky Mount tell us about our community? Does it project an image of pride that encourages investment?” This reality must be faced and then addressed directly.

Interject vitality and economic growth in the downtown and positive results will be realized in other economic development arenas. Downtown redevelopment reinforces and stimulates other types of economic growth. Intentionally developing downtown takes advantage of previous investment by the community’s forebearers and diversifies the region’s economy beyond industrial and technological development. It provides local real estate investment opportunities without encouraging sprawl. Previously weak property values are transformed into tax base stimulants and smart investments. Profits made are available for reinvestment

downtown and elsewhere. Elevating small business expansion to an economic development priority provides an opportunity to take advantage of the explosion in small, entrepreneurial businesses and creates a reinforcing incubator. All these advantages stimulate the wealth-creation engine – the ultimate economic development achievement.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

MAKE DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT THE ECONOMIC CENTER OF THE REGION AND AN INVITING PLACE TO LIVE AND DO BUSINESS.

STRATEGIES

POSITIONING

- ✧ Position downtown as a mixed-use area, targeting the following uses:
 - ✧ Educational center.
 - ✧ Convenience goods and services.
 - ✧ General office.
 - ✧ Cultural center.
 - ✧ Retail center.
 - ✧ Entertainment/restaurant district.
 - ✧ Technology center.
 - ✧ Urban residential neighborhood.
- ✧ Appeal to multiple markets: local, regional, Internet, and tourist.
- ✧ Develop coordinated marketing campaign to position downtown as an active, viable, interesting district. [See *Marketing/Promotion* chapter]
- ✧ Market to specific audiences and trade areas with tactics designed for those audiences. [See *Marketing/Promotion* chapter]
- ✧ Coordinate marketing position with the Nash County Tourism Development Authority and the Gateway Partnership.
- ✧ Build positioning in part around catalytic projects, such as the Imperial Centre and Train Station. Develop Twin Counties Museum and Hall of Fame. Consider initiating a railroad museum.
- ✧ Develop signs to post in windows of buildings indicating the building's availability for investment, purchase, or lease.

MULTIPLE, MIXED USES

- ✧ Make residential development, at several different price points, a high priority especially for upper stories.
- ✧ Support the mixed use Douglas Block redevelopment plan.
- ✧ Market downtown as the best location for start-up businesses.
- ✧ Target retail businesses that are heavily web-based and that could benefit from a small, street level retail component.
- ✧ Recruit/target businesses that build on the downtown's catalytic projects, such as art galleries, toy stores, arts and craft studios, living spaces for artists, railroad memorabilia, and child care.
- ✧ Target certain types of businesses/entrepreneurial clusters.
 - ✧ Restaurants.
 - ✧ Specialty furnishings and home décor.
 - ✧ Web-based businesses with front retail.
 - ✧ Location-neutral businesses.
 - ✧ Lifestyle specialty stores.
 - ✧ Personal services.
 - ✧ Neighborhood convenience.
 - ✧ Employment centers and general business offices.

The following business types might be feasible: coffee shops, fine crafts, delicatessens, bakeries, live music venues, training facilities, art galleries, independent book stores, general business uses, fine dining, pubs, secretarial/computer/copying services, office/stationery supply.

BUSINESS CLIMATE:

- ✧ Change/adjust local government policy to support a strong center city.
 - ✧ Outdoor dining.
 - ✧ Sidewalk entertainment.
 - ✧ Incentives.
 - ✧ Noise abatement.
- ✧ Work with affinity groups in downtown to assist in their success, such as minority business owners, women business owners, young professionals, minority property owners, etc.
- ✧ Ensure a "can-do, results-oriented attitude" among local government officials and staff.
- ✧ Publish plans and statements of support by local governments.
- ✧ Make resource experts available as needed, such as in the areas of tax credits, business planning, and architecture.

- ✧ Ensure that all economic development entities are unified in their message, approach and priority regarding downtown.
- ✧ Form and develop a downtown merchant's association. [See *Organization* chapter]
- ✧ Design traffic patterns to maximize convenience to businesses and customers and to be competitive with other business districts.
- ✧ Create an attractive, safe, functional, and accessible commercial and residential environment downtown. [See *Design* chapter]
- ✧ Design parking strategically so that the interests of users, pedestrians, businesses owners, residents, and employees are considered and incorporated. [See *Design* chapter]
- ✧ Ensure that lighting and other features project a feeling of safety and security. [See *Design* chapter]
- ✧ Ensure the downtown has a responsive, engaged, visible community policing presence. Implement a security plan specifically for downtown.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

- ✧ Encourage existing groups interested in stimulating business development to prioritize their resources toward downtown and to collaborate with one another on downtown projects. Ensure that the Small Business & Technology Development Center, Chamber of Commerce, RMECDC Business Center, Small Business Recruitment, community colleges, and Carolinas Gateway Partnership are involved.
- ✧ Use centralized retail management techniques — common store hours, joint advertising, attractive window displays, educational opportunities and others.
- ✧ Work to retain existing, viable businesses currently located downtown.
- ✧ Work with Sprint and other information technology-related companies and initiatives to position downtown as an ideal location for development of the technology sector.
- ✧ Work with developers of the Douglas Block to recruit specialized businesses for that area.
- ✧ Work with Edgecombe Community College to offer marketing classes for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and others.
- ✧ Create extensive database of businesses and properties, including ownership; tax information; race, gender, and age of owners; previous and current use; description from National Register nomination; length of ownership; property values; zoning; lot size; recent investment in property; building condition; use of City incentive package; and availability for sale or rent.

GOAL

IMPROVE INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN DOWNTOWN AND GENERATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS AND BUSINESSES.

STRATEGIES

TOOLS

- ✧ *Downtown Development Loan Fund* – Partner with the North Carolina Bankers Association and local banks to create a pool of funds that make capital (construction and permanent financing) available for downtown properties and investors, and leverage private investment.
- ✧ *Revolving Loan Pool* – Generate private capital for repositioning of more difficult buildings. Recycle capital over time. Use for-profit or not-for-profit structures.
- ✧ *Economic Analysis and Data* – Provide economic feasibility and market data to potential investors.
- ✧ *Local Historic District Designation* – Provide design guidelines for downtown that will establish a minimum quality standard of building rehabilitation and build investor security.
- ✧ *Local Landmark Designation* – Promote designation of local historic landmarks and the local tax advantages to property owners.
- ✧ *National Historic District* – Promote downtown’s status as a place where state and federal tax credits can be accessed.
- ✧ *City Incentive Package* – Continue City investment programs and expand as feasible, including façade improvement and rental assistance.
- ✧ *City Partnerships* – Tie investment of city dollars for infrastructure and appearance improvements to investment of private dollars downtown. Use City funds as leverage for private investment.
- ✧ *Self-Financing Bonds* – (Tax Increment Financing) – Use this new resource for carefully selected public purpose projects.

PRIVATE CAPITAL GENERATION:

- ✧ Recruit racially diverse group of investors who have “patient money” to invest, and who care about the future of Rocky Mount.
- ✧ Recruit experienced developers to undertake and invest in projects of multiple, contiguous properties.
- ✧ Tell the downtown story extensively. [See *Promotion* chapter]
- ✧ Produce concept document about the resurgence of downtown – vision, goals, land use concepts, and inspiration.
- ✧ Reposition and market Brownfield sites. Take advantage of incentive programs.

- ✧ Attract private investment in visionary and catalytic projects, such as the Imperial Centre, Train Station, Douglas Block, YMCA/Senior Center, and the Library.
- ✧ Continue to work with existing property owners to encourage their involvement in repositioning and reinvesting in their properties.

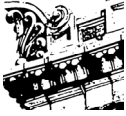
MANAGEMENT:

- ✧ Create single point of contact for information about development property and relocating downtown as well as grant and incentive programs.
- ✧ Create and maintain an up-to-date inventory of available sites, buildings, and space.
- ✧ Package and promote properties for renovation and rehabilitation.
- ✧ Educate property owners, potential investors and lessees on available resources, *i.e.*, tax credits, incentive programs, etc.
- ✧ Involve institutions of higher education in development opportunities.
- ✧ Provide technical assistance in taking projects from idea stage through design, economic structuring and financing.



THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THOSE WHO FUSE INTELLIGENCE WITH FAITH, AND WHO WITH COURAGE AND DETERMINATION GROPE THEIR WAY FORWARD FROM CHANCE TO CHOICE, FROM BLIND ADAPTATION TO CREATIVE EVOLUTION.

— CHARLES E. MERRIAM



WHEN WE LOOK AT CITIES WE SEE OURSELVES. WE HOPE OUR CHILDREN WILL LIKE WHAT THEY SEE.

—CUBE 1993

From the Main Street perspective, design is the backdrop for the rest of the program. This sense of theater, of setting the stage is especially important to Rocky Mount and its future. To set the stage, particular downtown design challenges must be addressed. The downtown environment, built and natural, must be perceived and repositioned in new ways. Community reinvestment patterns of the last two decades or so must be changed. A new ethic and standard of embracing quality historic preservation must be instigated and prevail over time. The space between the buildings must also be perceived as valuable. Sprawl must be managed by creating more density in the center city and historic core. The contiguous neighborhoods of interesting housing stock must be viewed as an important seam and transition between the downtown and the city beyond.

Taking these primary steps would build on Downtown Rocky Mount's existing character and reinforce the somewhat hidden sense of place. The "bones" of a special historic setting exist. Yet — numerous buildings are teetering on the brink of extinction unless intervention happens soon. This would be an extreme loss to the city, the region and the state. Most importantly, however, the soul, the history, the memory of the community is in eminent danger of slipping away... slowly... until the downtown is unrecognizable – and the center of the Twin County region is forever lost. The longer the wait, however, the more expensive the intervention needed. This generation must rescue these existing historic assets before they disappear.

This sounds dramatic, yet it is real. Without its heart... Rocky Mount could evolve into a nowhere, everywhere community.

The historic assets in Rocky Mount's Primary Focus Area, and to a lesser degree in the Secondary Focus area are significant. This was recognized in 1979 when Downtown Rocky Mount was designated a National Historic District by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. That assessment found 164 contributing and pivotal buildings in the district. Of these 164, a number of them were demolished in the ensuing 25 years. Since 1979 not much investment has occurred in historic properties; not much was disturbed on existing buildings either. Buildings, materials, and design integrity are generally intact and convey historic meaning and origins. With an infusion of capital, good preservation practices, creativity, and hard work, these assets can be saved and used to stimulate economic growth.

All across America, cities similar to Rocky Mount have turned their communities (not only downtowns) around, using quality historic preservation as the biggest tool. These historic properties provide a distinct economic advantage: they use existing infrastructure; they are unique; they are right-sized for small business; they use a valuable community asset; and they appeal to heritage tourists. Heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism market. Other communities know this and are repositioning architecturally interesting properties to their best contributing level.

Compared to other commercial areas, Downtown Rocky Mount's building stock is significantly underutilized, reflecting the steady erosion of commercial activity over decades. A few primary businesses anchor the street, providing some essential products and service. Around the core area, more suburban type development has evolved, which has diminished the downtown's identity and urban form. The architectural character of downtown's most active buildings is dominated by commercial building types and styles dating from the 1880s through the 1930s, reflecting the influence of modern aesthetics and contrasting with the more eclectic commercial buildings of the prior generation.

Like many towns, Rocky Mount's historic commercial architecture was diminished over time by successive waves of renovation and alteration. The majority of this accumulation of change occurs at the ground level in the form of storefront alterations. The full effect of these changes is exacerbated by the stark nature of the natural environment. The lack of landscaping, railscaping, and streetscaping accentuates the decline of the built environment.

Use of historic preservation and good design and land use principles can reverse these trends. Historic preservation places the highest value on authenticity of place and character-defining elements while recognizing and respecting the evolutionary nature of communities. When change occurs, it should be realized in a manner that complements the fundamental character of the place. Where unsympathetic changes have already occurred, recovery of original form and detail or modification to achieve a more harmonious effect are the preferred strategies. Recently revised guidelines developed by the Historic Preservation Commission and ratified by City Council include standards for development in the downtown. These guidelines add a much needed local underpinning to the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines. Copies are available in the City of Rocky Mount's Planning & Development Department offices.

Without a Local Historic District, use of these guidelines is voluntary except for tax credit or City incentive projects. Strategies included in the Plan call for the creation of a Local Historic District. In addition to setting a minimal standard for building rehabilitation, a district would send a strong message to potential investors that their investment would be protected.

The public realm and its design cannot be overlooked. Great cities combine well-conceived, beautiful public spaces and amenities with quality, attractive, functional building stock. Commitment to high quality design and maintenance in public spaces is critical to revitalization as it sets the stage for each building's redevelopment. The public sector must set

the bar for quality rehabilitation and reinvestment. Private investment in building rehabilitation is much more likely where a plan for public improvements helps create a protected environment for investment – that is, where individual private investment decisions are assured that like-minded public investment decisions will advance common goals. This public improvement plan, called an Urban Design Plan, describes essential overall design concepts and pattern language for landscape and streetscape. The Plan lays out functional and appealing projects to tackle that over time that will greatly enhance the downtown’s appearance and livability. These improvements must be made a high priority by the appropriate bodies.

While by themselves streetscape improvements cannot be expected to stimulate revitalization, the appearance of downtown has a huge impact on its appeal to investors, business owners, and residents. People love spaces that are functional, comfortable, and beautiful. Design sets the stage for economic growth to work.

DESIGN GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

CREATE AN EXCITING, AUTHENTIC, AND POSITIVE IDENTITY FOR DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT USING HISTORICAL PRESERVATION AS A MAJOR FOCUS.

STRATEGIES

LEARNING, TEACHING RESOURCES

- ✧ Educate the downtown community regarding the advantages of historic preservation, historic tax credits, and local historic districts.
- ✧ Enhance the collection of Rocky Mount historic photos, materials, public records.
- ✧ Interpret Rocky Mount’s urban history in the downtown through engaging mediums, such as public art, interpretive displays, historical markers, and publications.
- ✧ Create a local history resource for 4th and 8th grade teachers (grades at which children are taught local and state history and government) to teach local history and the downtown story.
- ✧ Use Rocky Mount history to teach about the importance of downtown and inspire its renewal.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT/HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- ✧ Establish a local historic district in the downtown.
- ✧ Create an informational pamphlet that specifically highlights development using Historic Preservation Guidelines in commercial historic district.

- ✧ Provide technical assistance to property owners regarding design, historic preservation, and appropriate rehabilitation.
- ✧ Encourage the use of the city's façade improvement and major impact incentive programs.
- ✧ Encourage sensitive rehabilitation, adaptive re-use and compatible in-fill of buildings in the Douglas Block area.
- ✧ Support property owners in taking advantage of federal and state historic tax credits through technical assistance, workshops, and educational information.

APPEARANCE/SAFETY

- ✧ Encourage appealing and effective storefronts, window displays, lighting, plantings, signage and gateways.
- ✧ Ensure the downtown area is inviting, clean, and safe.
- ✧ Use Rocky Mount's historic resources to establish the downtown's brand and identity.

GOAL

MAKE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CENTER CITY THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE, FUNCTIONAL AND CAPITALIZE ON DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT'S SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC ASSETS.

STRATEGIES

URBAN DESIGN PLAN AND IMPROVEMENTS

- ✧ Create and implement Urban Design Plan in appropriate phases.
 - ✧ Respect the heritage character of downtown through appropriate materials, design, art, and street furniture.
 - ✧ Create a greener downtown.
 - ✧ Establish, promote and practice good community design principles.
 - ✧ Alleviate the visual impact of parking.
 - ✧ Reduce visual clutter.
 - ✧ Increase the connections between the major activity centers downtown.
 - ✧ Create pedestrian friendly areas.
 - ✧ Improve open spaces (public and private), for recreation, leisure, and people gathering purposes.
 - ✧ Provide adequate parking for future active uses downtown.
 - ✧ Use quality, durable materials appropriate for urban settings.
 - ✧ Establish appealing focal points of fiscal and historic interest.
 - ✧ Create an integrated system of public signage.
 - ✧ Take advantage of the railroad open space to the greatest extent possible.

- ✧ Ensure design, materials, furnishings, and signage creates a unified appearance.
- ✧ Encourage spaces downtown appropriate for outdoor dining.
- ✧ Acknowledge and consider the work of the NC A&T landscape architecture students.
- ✧ Create functional, effective pedestrian patterns and flow to encourage strolling, window-shopping, ease of access, and social interaction. Eliminate “dead” spaces.
- ✧ Identify under-utilized parcels and work to move them into effective uses.

FUNCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

- ✧ Create gateway and directional signage.
- ✧ Promote and improve alleys as safe, attractive connectors.
- ✧ Provide adequate resources for City services needed to engender Downtown success including law enforcement, sanitation, inspections, design, parking and plan review.
- ✧ Ensure proper provision of infrastructure — natural gas, fiber optics, electricity, storm drainage, telephone, parking, etc.
- ✧ Integrate results from the traffic circulation and railroad crossing study as appropriate.
- ✧ Ensure parking that is accessible and convenient and supports a variety of uses within the downtown.

MAINTENANCE

- ✧ Commit to ongoing maintenance in public spaces downtown and life-cycle planning for infrastructure program.
- ✧ Research and develop appropriate ordinances, spaces, and opportunities for outdoor dining.



IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THOSE PEOPLE MAKING DECISIONS ON DESIGN TODAY MUST LOOK AHEAD 30 TO 40 YEARS, BECAUSE THE DECISIONS MADE TODAY WILL BE A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY AND AFFECT DESIGN FOR MANY YEARS.

— MAYOR JACK WHITE, SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

MARKETING AND PROMOTION



CHARACTER COMES FROM PEOPLE, FROM THE PAST, FROM TRADITION, FROM THE INTERPLAY OF HUMAN FORCES AND EMOTIONS IN THE PROCESS OF DAILY LIFE.

IT SPRINGS FROM THE BAZAARS AND MARKETPLACES, THE WHY AND HOW CITIES BEGAN, WHERE PEOPLE COULD MEET, BUY, EXCHANGE, COMMUNICATE, WORK, CAROUSE, STEAL, FIGHT, LOVE, RELAX, BE ENTERTAINED, AND LEARN. THE MARKETPLACE IS THE CITY AND THE CITY IS THE MARKETPLACE AND THE CHARACTER OF A CITY IS THE MEASURABLE EVIDENCE OF ITS MARKETS, THEIR CONTINUITY AND THEIR VIBRANCE.

WHERE THOSE MARKETPLACES ARE STILL CLOSEST TO THE PEOPLE, TO THE STREETS AND SQUARES WHERE THEY BEGAN, ONE FINDS A CITY DEEP AND RICH IN CHARACTER.

— IAN MENZIES

The word *promote* is defined as “to move forward,” “to further the growth or establishment of something,” “to work actively and stir up interest for the accomplishment of something.” These definitions are precisely the aim of promoting the downtown, the revitalization effort and the businesses and people within the Downtown Rocky Mount community. The promotional component of the revitalization program is intended to:

- ❖ Move the revitalization process forward,
- ❖ Advance the growth of appropriate types of development in the downtown,
- ❖ Actively work to create enthusiasm for revitalization in the community, and
- ❖ Bring visitors, shoppers, and customers downtown.

Promoting the downtown is more than banners on poles and the distribution of flyers. It is the sophisticated deployment of carefully selected marketing tactics, appropriately applied over time. The downtown is competing in markets with savvy players and it must respond in-kind.

The concept of promotion, as it relates to downtown revitalization, includes an internal and an external component. The concept of *external promotion*, marketing or selling the downtown community and its component businesses and services to the local, regional and tourist market, is the more obvious aspect of promotion. *Internal promotion* involves convincing the Rocky Mount community of the worth of the downtown. Internal promotion also includes communication among the revitalization players themselves. Energy and enthusiasm – both internal and external – is needed to stimulate and sustain the other components of the Main Street process.

The purpose of promotion is to tout the offerings and services of the downtown to existing and potential markets and to sell the downtown to those who are or should be involved in the revitalization process. To accomplish this purpose, it is essential to understand the markets of downtown and to identify the primary, secondary and perhaps tertiary trade areas. Addressing the nuances of multiple audiences and trade areas can seem overwhelming at times. This analysis facilitates expanding resources where they will have the most impact. Using an ineffective tactic on the wrong audience can waste huge amounts of dollars and energy. Devising a marketing plan that incorporates this analysis, a positioning statement, and tactics is a useful tool. It will customize marketing/promotion efforts to Rocky Mount's situation.

One of the important elements of promoting a community is to develop an authentic identity. That image must be carefully crafted and staged. Image development ignored can easily become image abhorred. Basing it on an appreciation for the City's history, culture, built environment, memories and stories makes it genuine. This naturally appeals to Rocky Mount locals and to visitors. Using history in this way creates a rallying point around the mission. Involving citizens in the process of collecting photographs and stories of the people, places, and events that comprise the history of downtown helps to hook them into the revitalization effort.

Rocky Mount can take advantage of the high interest in heritage tourism. Heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of tourism in North Carolina and America. These tourists are generally 45 years old or older and have substantial disposable income. Working closely with the Rocky Mount Travel & Tourism Authority to coordinate promotions will extend the community's resources. Special events are a great method for building an image, providing fun for home folk, attracting visitors, and creating a "buzz." Downtown should host a year-round series of events.

Enhancement of Rocky Mount's downtown image will be a driver for revitalization and engender community pride. Remember: regardless of their perspective, all of these interest groups appreciate and are attracted to a community that places an emphasis on quality; is clean and orderly; possesses a sense of place; and evokes genuine identity of a community that cares about itself and its people.

The Action Plan's point of reference is authentically Rocky Mount. This acceptance and appreciation for itself is the image and pride Rocky Mount needs to cultivate and preserve. Rocky Mount and the region are *real* places with interesting, unique, and different people, culture, and natural and physical surroundings. We can capitalize on them.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

PROMOTE DOWNTOWN AS A DESTINATION FOR CUSTOMERS, WORKERS, RESIDENTS, AND VISITORS.

STRATEGIES

COLLATERAL

- ✧ Develop a promotion plan and campaign, including market analysis, web presence, logo, graphics, stance line and collateral to target
 - ✧ Adjacent residential areas
 - ✧ Church members
 - ✧ College students and staff
 - ✧ Older residents
 - ✧ Middle-income households
 - ✧ Local employees
 - ✧ Tourists
 - ✧ Residents
- ✧ Develop a downtown business directory and guide with maps.
- ✧ Take advantage of downtown's historic fabric and assets in promotional material.
- ✧ Research and make available data on the downtown's trade areas and audiences. Target marketing resources to these audiences according to the research.

CUSTOMER RELATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS

- ✧ Work to preserve ground floor retail space.
- ✧ Use web-based resources and vehicles to reach a wide variety of and audiences. Link the downtown to other, allied web sites.
- ✧ Encourage the library to expand its local history collection.
- ✧ Use local media to spotlight events, cover interesting feature stories, and follow the revitalization progress.
- ✧ Encourage downtown merchants to do joint promotions, advertising, and graphics and to participate in events and festivals.
- ✧ Create a promotions/marketing committee composed of merchants, property owners, marketing professionals and others.
- ✧ Use vacant storefronts/windows for displays.
- ✧ Continue to tell the downtown story to multiple and diverse audiences.

- ✧ Develop signs to post in windows of buildings indicating the building's availability for investment, purchase, or lease.

AMENITIES

- ✧ Explore downtown as the location for the Twin Counties Hall of Fame.
- ✧ Promote outdoor dining, street performances, public art.
- ✧ Capitalize on Rocky Mount's railroad history and assets. Consider initiating a railroad museum.
- ✧ Provide public spaces and venues for downtown events and outdoor activities in the Urban Design Plan.

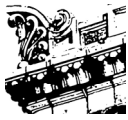
GOAL

CREATE FUN, EXCITING, AND CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO EXPERIENCE DOWNTOWN.

STRATEGIES

- ✧ Work with Down East Festival Committee/Downtown Merchants to expand the festival and to involve merchants in the planning and implementation of the festival.
- ✧ Partner with the Travel and Tourism Board and City's Special Events Planner to create a series of downtown events, *i.e.*, concerts, festivals, outdoor family movies, block parties using the Train Station Commons area, Harambee Square and other locations.
- ✧ Create and publish a calendar of downtown events.
- ✧ Coordinate downtown activities with Imperial Centre.
- ✧ Develop tours and events about the history of the central city, buildings, events, people and activities.
- ✧ Generate enthusiasm regarding the Imperial Centre through displays, hardhat tours, events and media.

Transportation



WE WHIZ BY [THE BUILDINGS] AT FIFTY-FIVE MILES AN HOUR AND FORGET THEM, BECAUSE ONE CONVENIENCE STORE LOOKS LIKE THE NEXT. THEY DO NOT CELEBRATE ANYTHING BEYOND THEIR MECHANISTIC ABILITY TO SELL MERCHANDISE. WE DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER THEM. WE DID NOT SAVOR THE APPROACH AND WE WERE NOT REWARDED UPON REACHING THE DESTINATION, AND IT WILL BE THE SAME NEXT TIME, AND EVERY TIME. THERE IS LITTLE SENSE OF HAVING ARRIVED ANYWHERE, BECAUSE EVERYPLACE LOOKS LIKE NO PLACE IN PARTICULAR.

— JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER

Transportation systems are vital for getting people to and around downtown while adding dimension and balance to their experience. Raymond Unwin, a renowned town planner, once wrote: “It was not deemed enough that a road should serve as a means of communication from one place to another, it was also desired that it should afford some dignity of approach to important buildings and be a pleasant way for the passerby.” Furthermore, getting people to and around downtown is vital for stimulating economic activity and supporting business creation and retention.

The Action Plan was created using the Main Street Model of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Transportation is not typically a part of the model; however, this Transportation chapter was added to reflect Rocky Mount’s significant transportation issues and the importance of these issues in the overall revitalization of Downtown Rocky Mount.

Traditionally, transportation is viewed as a vehicle and street issue. However, transportation systems are established to support a variety of modes such as vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle and rail. In the downtown area, these wide variety of modes come together and must be collectively and comprehensively addressed.

A quick look in Downtown Rocky Mount shows vehicles are the primary source of transportation in and around downtown at this time. Downtown is well served, perhaps over served by streets, or has streets with an overabundance of capacity to move traffic. This is further compounded by a number of one-way streets that move traffic quickly through downtown, perhaps too well. Many communities, including Rocky Mount are exploring converting existing one-way streets to two way. The prevailing wisdom is that two-way streets can enhance a neighborhood’s environment, reduce speed to levels more compatible with

pedestrian traffic and create “busy” streets which can be an indicator of healthy business environment. They also slow down customers so they can observe downtown---people, display windows, signs, and happenings.

Parking is another important vehicular transportation component. The current supply of parking appears to be satisfactory, however, with significant redevelopment and reuse of existing vacant buildings parking may become problematic. Many downtown merchants have expressed concern about the amount, location and use of parking and these concerns will need to be addressed.

For pedestrians, sidewalks are fundamental to neighborhood environments and a key component of a broad and comprehensive transportation network. Much of the downtown area is served by sidewalks. The existing sidewalks vary greatly in condition and appearance, ranging from structurally sound to deteriorated. Many sidewalks are not handicapped accessible. Creating a safe and inviting pedestrian experience is vital to downtown redevelopment efforts.

The use and treatment of the railroad will affect all the transportation systems in the downtown area. As previously discussed in this Plan, the City must begin to take advantage of the railroad and its physical, economic, and historic contributions to downtown. The railroad presence along Main Street is unique. There are a number of transportation issues around the treatment of railroad, including the frequency and length of trains traversing downtown, the number of vehicle crossings and their location, the method and location of pedestrian crossings, and the overall appearance of the railroad’s property.

As downtown revitalization efforts continue, overall transportation systems will be addressed to ensure they support and enhance our efforts.

TRANSPORTATION GOAL AND STRATEGIES

GOAL

PROVIDE A WELCOMING AND SAFE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESSIBLE TO PEDESTRIANS, CARS, TRAINS, BUSES, AND BICYCLES.

STRATEGIES

GENERAL

- ✧ Prepare an urban design plan to address transportation infrastructure, beautification and capital improvements in the downtown area.
- ✧ Respond as appropriate to the “Rocky Mount Downtown Circulation Study”.
- ✧ Establish coordinated transportation signage and way-finding program.

PEDESTRIAN

- ✧ Construct wide, safe, and attractive sidewalks to encourage pedestrian traffic in the downtown area.
- ✧ Provide handicapped accessible sidewalks and rail crossings in the downtown area.
- ✧ Use pedestrian islands, textures, materials, and colors to delineate crosswalks.
- ✧ Delineate clearly pedestrian walking spaces.
- ✧ Ensure the location, design, and placement of street furniture and other design amenities promote pedestrian traffic and do not obstruct views or passage.
- ✧ Use lighting to enhance downtown ambience and promote a safe feeling downtown.
- ✧ Coordinate traffic signals to facilitate block- to-block walking and easy street crossings.

BICYCLE

- ✧ Ensure the downtown transportation network accommodates bicycles and cyclists.
- ✧ Create bicycle paths that make connections between downtown and the greenway system.
- ✧ Provide ample bicycle parking downtown.
- ✧ Ensure all downtown bicycle paths and linkages with the greenway are clearly marked.
- ✧ Limit bicycle traffic to designated paths.

TRAINS

- ✧ Provide adequate and safe pedestrian crossings at the railroad tracks.
- ✧ Use Rocky Mount's railroad history for marketing purposes.
- ✧ Post electronic signs regarding train crossings, rerouting options, and wait time.

CARS

- ✧ Repair or remove brick wall adjacent to railroad tracks.
- ✧ Assess the parking needs for downtown and plan for the creation of additional parking coordinated with the redevelopment and reuse of buildings.
- ✧ Explore the use of alternate parking methods, such as parallel, angle and backed-into parking.

BUSES

- ✧ Identify bus stops with attractive signs.
- ✧ Locate bus stops and benches strategically in the downtown area.
- ✧ Remove the bus stop in front of the former People's Bank Building and relocate.



STREETS AND THEIR SIDEWALKS, THE MAIN PUBLIC PLACES OF A CITY, ARE ITS MOST VITAL ORGANS.

— JANE JACOBS

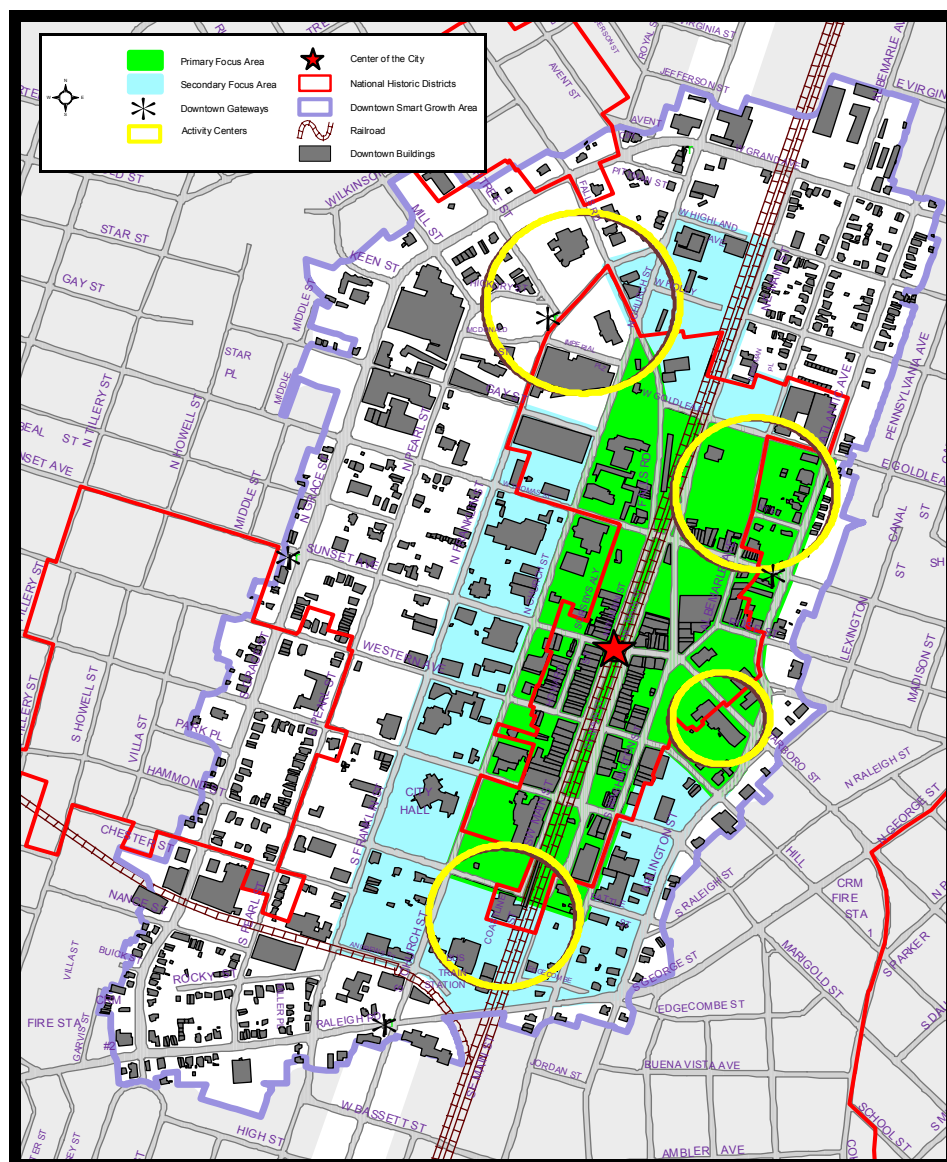


EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED... NO ONE THING CAN CHANGE BY ITSELF.

— PAUL HARKEN

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY FOCUS AREAS

In Spring 2004 the CCRP adopted functional target areas for the core of Downtown Rocky Mount. The intent of these delineations was to concentrate resources in specific areas so as to make noticeable, positive change. Rocky Mount's downtown is a reasonably large area. By determining what resources will apply according to geographic location prior to major reinvestment, the redevelopment process will be expedited and transparent.



LAND USE – PRIMARY AND SECONDARY FOCUS AREAS DEFINITIONS ⁴

PRIMARY FOCUS AREA:

- ✧ Near-term timetable
- ✧ Focus by CCR Panel
- ✧ Targeted for grants
 - ✧ Main Street: Major Impact and Rental Assistance
 - ✧ Façade Improvement
- ✧ Revolving loan pool activity
- ✧ Downtown storefront office location
- ✧ Green space development
- ✧ Civic amenities location
- ✧ Local historic district (proposed)
- ✧ Demonstration projects
- ✧ City infrastructure and streetscape improvements
- ✧ Street level spaces as people-generators – restaurants, retail, destination commercial and multi-use upper levels
- ✧ Urban Design Plan emphasis
- ✧ Services from the municipal government will be specifically designed for the urban core and will be different from other commercial areas of the city.

SECONDARY FOCUS AREA:

- ✧ Later-term timetable
- ✧ Urban Design Plan inclusion
- ✧ Targeted for Façade Improvement grants
- ✧ Monitoring impact on primary area
- ✧ Complementary uses to primary area

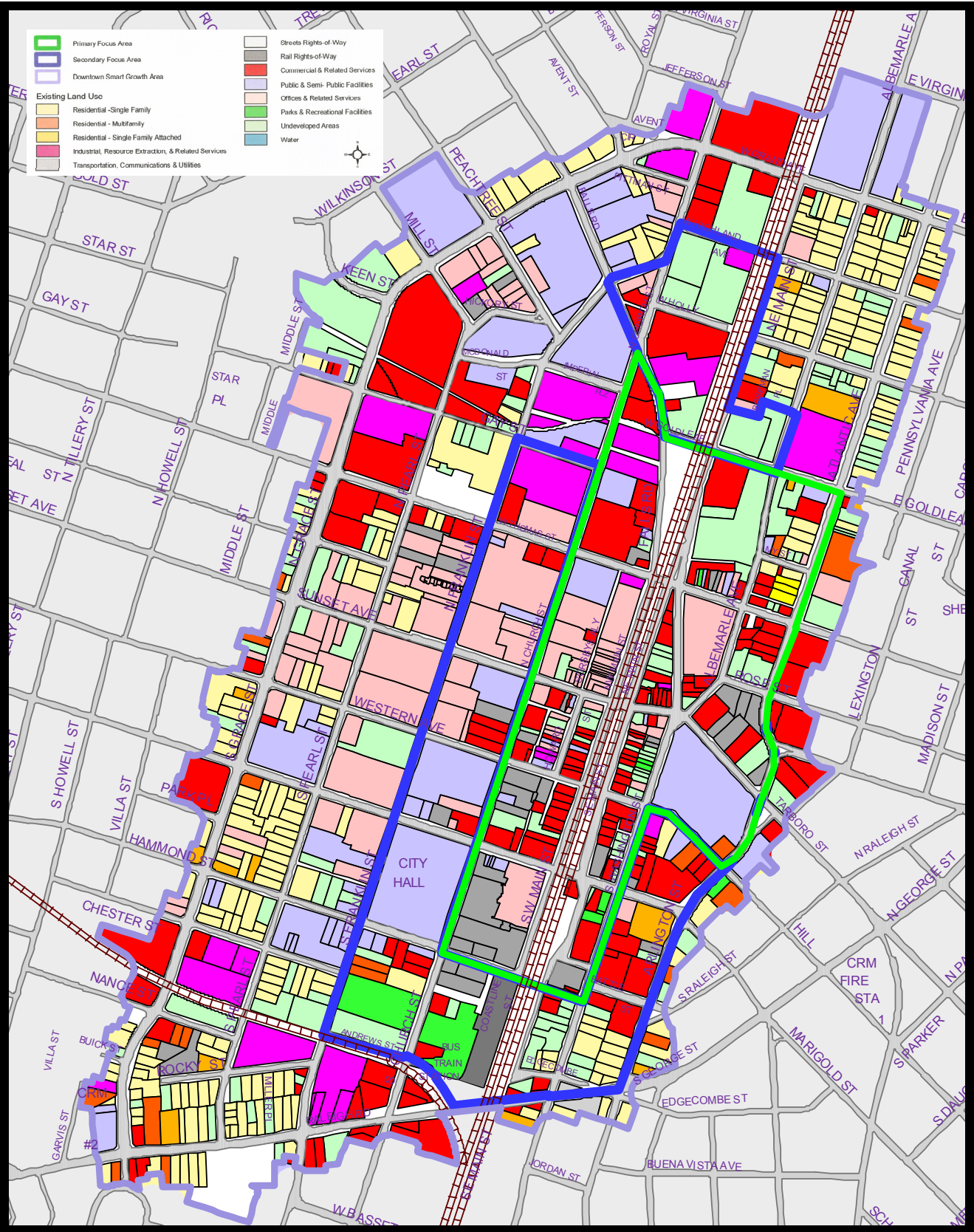
TAX VALUE

In developing this plan, the tax value of downtown properties was determined within these two official boundaries. This sets a benchmark to evaluate future progress. In 2004 the values are as follows:

Primary Focus Area	\$	29,579,754
Central Business District	\$	97,316,537
City of Rocky Mount	\$	2,935,589,848



LAND USE — EXISTING

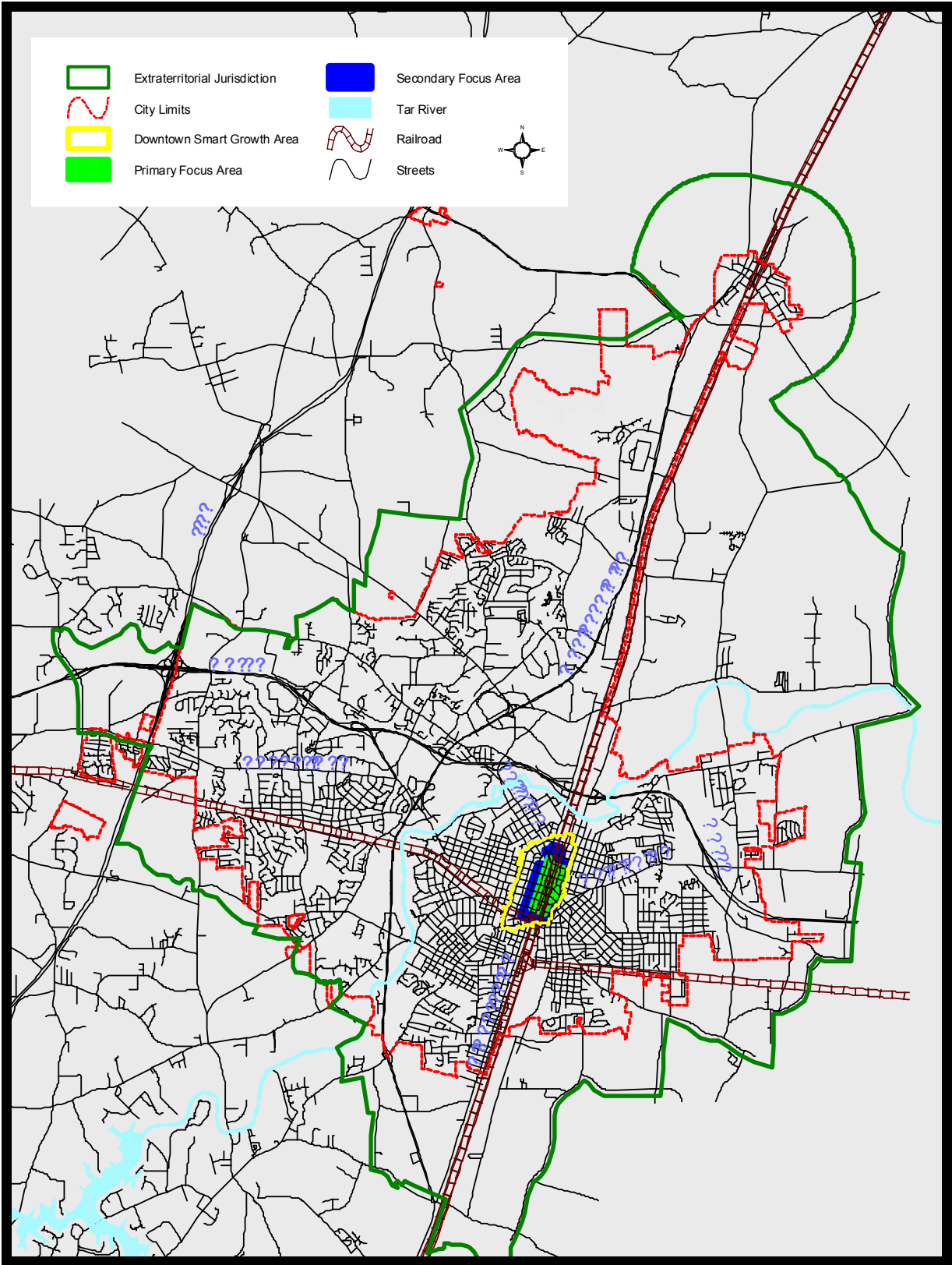




~~_____~~ *BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE DOUGLAS BLOCK*

~~_____~~ *NORTH CAROLINA A&T STUDENTS' CONCEPT*

DOWNTOWN WITHIN THE CITY



APPENDIX



WHATEVER YOU CAN DO, OR DREAM YOU CAN, BEGIN IT. BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER AND MAGIC IN IT. BEGIN IT NOW.

— GOETHE

NEXT STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

As stated in the *Organization* chapter, the veracity of a revitalization plan is ultimately determined by the amount and quality of community change that happens. Of the 149 strategies listed in this Action Plan, some are more immediate than others. Listed below are a limited number of priority projects currently underway.

1. Local Historic District Designation
2. Two-Way Traffic Study
3. Douglas Block Redevelopment Plan
4. Revitalization Incentive Grants
5. Downtown Development Loan Fund
6. Downtown Organization Structure
7. Building Rehabilitation
8. Imperial Centre
9. Urban Design: Landscape/Streetscape/Appearance/Infrastructure/Parking

Also included in the Appendix is an example of the *Track Record*, a matrix showing data on current projects and their status. Each month staff records progress on a pre-determined set of priorities. The CCRP reviews this document on a frequent basis. The volunteers are kept aware of issues and monitor progress using this tool. Members are encouraged to share it externally. Staff use it as a reminder of what needs to be accomplished soon. Hopefully, it keeps pressure on all the players to get their tasks completed!



THE SECRET OF SUCCESS IS CONSTANCY OF PURPOSE.

— BENJAMIN DISRAELI

PROGRESS TRACKING CHART

DOWNTOWN ROCKY MOUNT

PROGRESS TRACKING CHART

MARCH 5, 2005

OUR VISION... A THRIVING, SAFE CITY CENTER THAT PRESERVES HISTORIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASSETS, PROMOTES ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY AND DIVERSITY, AND IS A LOCATION OF CHOICE TO LIVE, WORK, VISIT, AND

Priority	Projects	Responsible Parties	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
Historic Preservation Guidelines	Revision of Guidelines	Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)	Complete	07/30/04	HPC, Planning Board Review
	Approval Process	HPC, City Council	In Progress	02/15/05	To City Council Work Session on 01/24/05
	Booklet Specific to Downtown	Planning and Downtown Staff, Panel	Pending	02/15/05	
	Implementation	Planning and Downtown Staff, HPC	Pending	Upon adoption	
Local Historic District Designation	Education Process	Panel, Preservation Rocky Mount, Downtown Renaissance, Inc. (DRD), HPC	On-Going	04/15/05	
	Work Session		<u>Scheduled</u>	03/18/05	Randy Hemann of Salisbury, NC
	Prepare presentations and talking points/ visuals	Rudolph Knight, Leslie Anderson	In Progress	04/07/05	
	Prepare list of property owners in national historic district		In Progress	04/07/05	
	Begin formation of Downtown Merchant Association	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown office	Ongoing		Monthly Meetings scheduled for the 3 rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM at Chamber Board Room.
	Engage property owners	Panel			
	Approval Process	Panel, HPC, City Council	Pending	02/15/05	

P r i o r i t y	P r o j e c t s	R e s p o n s i b l e P a r t i e s	S t a t u s	T a r g e t	N o t e s
Downtown Action Plan	Writing of Plan	Planning and Downtown	In Progress	03/03/05	
	Organization	Leslie Anderson	In Progress	03/03/05	<u>Approved</u>
	Design	Planning Staff	In Progress	03/03/05	<u>Approved</u>
	Economic Restructuring	Planning and Downtown Staff	In Progress	03/03/05	<u>Approved</u>
	Marketing	Planning Staff	In Progress	03/03/05	<u>Approved</u>
	Transportation	Outside Contractor, Peter Varney	Pending		Pending Outcome of Downtown Circulation Study
	Maps	Planning Staff	In Progress	03/03/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary/ Secondary Land use – existing and future Catalytic projects Downtown in city
Two-Way Traffic Study	Approval Process	Panel, Planning Board, City Council	Pending		Final Draft to CCRP 02/3/05
	Implementation	Downtown Staff, Panel, and	Pending	Ongoing	
	<i>Funding Secured</i> Outside Contractor Selection	Peter Varney <i>Peter Varney, NCDOT</i>	Complete Complete	07/05/04	NCDOT and City
	Implementation of Study	Contractor	<u>In Progress</u>	12/01/04	Public Meetings: 11/4 & 11/11/2004
	Review of Findings	City Staff, Panel, NCDOT, City Council	In Progress	02/15/05	Pending Outcome of Downtown Circulation Study
	Implementation of Findings	City Staff, NCDOT	Pending		Pending Outcome of Downtown Circulation Study

P riority	P rojects	R esponsible P arties	S tatus	T arget	N otes
Douglas Block Redevelopment Plan	Selection of Consulting Firm	Planning Staff, Redevelopment Commission	Complete		The Walker Collaborative
	Redevelopment Plan Development	The Walker Collaborative	Complete	08/15/04	
	Review of Plan	Redevelopment Commission, City Staff, Panel, Neighborhood, Planning Board	Complete	12/01/04	
	Adoption	City Council	Pending		
	Implementation of Plan	Redevelopment Commission, Planning staff, Private Partners	Pending		
Revitalization Incentive Grants	Streamline Application Process	Ian Kipp, Vanessa McCleary	Complete	12/03/04	
	Distribution of Package	Downtown Staff	Ongoing		
	Processing of applications	Community Development Staff, Downtown Staff, Panel	Ongoing and In Progress		
	Implementation of Projects	Awardees	Ongoing		
	RMECDC Rocky Mount Floral Old Post Office Building Moore's Bike Shop Tees R Us Tyson's Upholstery		Complete In Progress In Progress In Progress	07/01/04 05/01/04 Finalizing Canopy & Rear Patio Designs	
Business Recruitment	Temporary Roof/ Shed	Downtown, Contractor	Complete	06/01/04 02/28/05	Application Pending Reviewing Designs Success!
	Processing of Inquiries	Small Business Recruiter,	In Progress		

Priority	Projects	Responsible Parties	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
Pool of Investors	Prospect Cultivation and Recruitment	Assistant City Manager, Panel	Planning		Hold until loan fund is announced
	Cultivation Event and Follow-Up	Downtown Staff, Assistant City Manager	Pending		
	Investment Criteria/ Approach	Investors	Pending		
	Investment Process	Investors and City Staff	Pending		
Revolving Loan Fund	Research of Models	Community Development Staff	Complete	07/01/04	
	<i>Recruitment of Partners</i>	Community Development Staff, City Manager	Complete	08/31/04	NC Bankers Association, HUD, local banks, City
	Establish Loan Loss Reserve	City Council	Complete		
	Writing of Guidelines/ Criteria/Process	Partners	In Progress	03/15/05	Agreement being finalized.
	Implementation	Community Development Staff, Partners	Pending	04/15/05	
Downtown Organization Structure	Draft of Action Plan Chapter	Downtown Staff	Complete	09/04/04	
	Approval of Chapter	Panel, City Manager	Complete	06/03/04	
	Hiring of Downtown Manager	City Manager	Complete	10/05/04	Ian Kipp hired
	Implementation	Panel, DRI, City Staff, Others	Pending		
Telling the Story	Talking Points Developed	City Staff	Complete	02/01/04	
	Presentations	City Staff and Others	In Progress and Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 presentations to date Tar River Kiwanis on February 23, 2005 Movies & Flower Basket Coverage Pending
	Media Relations	Public Information Officers, Downtown Staff, Others	Ongoing		
Education and Inspiration	New Bern Trip	Panel and Staff	Complete	03/24/04	10 attendees
	"Downtown Buildings as Assets" Workshop	Downtown Staff	Complete	04/27/04	35 attendees
	Bridgers Project – Tarboro	Panel	Complete	07/14/04	6 attendees

ROCKY MOUNT DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

Priority	Projects	Responsible Parties	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
Building Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation – Facilitation/ Assistance/ Advocacy Implementation	Downtown Staff, Property Owners	Ongoing		
		Property Owners	In Progress		
	Commercial Construction Trade Class Building Rehabilitation	Community Development Staff	In Progress		Partners: NC Commercial Builders Association and Nash Community College
	Peoples Bank	Self-Help	In Progress		Pre-leasing underway
	Raper Drugs	Mae Frazier	In Progress		Fenestration Restoration
	Carleton House & Motel	NC Wesleyan College, City Manager &, Downtown Manager	In Progress	06/15/05	NCWC to implement plan in three phases
	OK Clothing Building	Jessica & Michael Smith	In Progress		Closing on 03/22/05
	Rocky Mount Floral Company	Elizabeth & Darin Scott	In Progress		Exploring Tax Credits
	May-Gorham Building	Investors	In Progress		Will re-open restaurant at 5 Corners
Imperial Centre	Hiring Contractor-At-Risk	Peter Varney	Complete	03/01/04	Barnhill Construction
	Approval of Design by National Park Service	Peter Varney	Complete	12/01/03	
	Funding identified	Peter Varney	In progress	12/21/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Market Tax Credits secured for last funding piece Closing on financing agreements is scheduled for 12/21/04
	Small, Intact Projects	Peter Varney, Contractors	Complete	12/15/03	Water Tank Refurbished
	Remediation	Peter Varney, Contractors	Complete	11/10/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoke Stack Refurbished Coal Bin Lead Contamination
	Brownfield Application	Peter Varney	In Progress	02/15/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UST Removal, Gay St. Asbestos Removal UST Removal, Franklin St. AST removal in coal bin
	Construction Implementation	Barnhill Const., Peter Varney	In Progress		NC Div. of Waste Management has approved application
	Bid Package #1		In Progress	01/31/05	More testing required
	Bid Package #2		Complete	12/31/05	
	Bid Package #3		Complete	12/31/05	Awarded 11/17/04
	Bid Package #4 (theatre)		In Progress		

Priority	Projects	Responsible Parties	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
Urban Design Landscape/ Streetscape/ Appearance Infra- structure)	NCA&T Plan	NCA&T Professor Howard and Students	Complete	12/02/03	
	RFP Development	Downtown, Engineering, Planning	In Progress	11/05/04	In review by City departments
	Selection of Consultant	Planning, Downtown	On Hold	12/20/04	Waiting for traffic study data
	Funding: Planning and Construction	City Staff, City Council	Complete	06/30/04	City budget includes funding for Plan and some projects
	Urban Design Plan Development	Planning Staff, Downtown Staff, Landscape Architect	On Hold for Traffic Circulation	05/15/05	Coordinate with traffic study
Database Development	Initial Projects Implementation	Contract City Staff and Contractors	Pending	2005	Awaiting funding and plan
	Properties	Downtown, Planning	Completed Draft	12/01/04	
	Downtown Community	Downtown, Planning	Complete	12/01/04	
Marketing	Phantom Storefront 123-5 SE Main	Downtown, Volunteers	In Progress	03/15/05	Painting and Carpentry Completed
	Transom Window Uniform Numbering	Downtown	In Progress		Artwork being finalized Survey done
	Downtown Movies Under the Stars	Downtown Staff, Parks Dept., Chamber of Commerce	In Progress	04/08/05	Numbers to be ordered Animated Movies on 04/8,15,22, 29/05 on RR Com- mons
	Newsletter	Ian Kipp			
	Fall 2004 Winter 2005 Spring 2005 Fall 2005		Complete Pending	11/28/04 03/07/05 06/01/05	

END NOTES

¹ Conner, Daryl, *Leading at the Edge of Change*, Jossey-Bass, 2001, pages 218-219.

² *Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy*, Henton, Melville and Walesh, 1997, page 34.

³ *Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy*.

⁴ Not listed in any priority order.



**THE FINAL
TEST OF A
PLAN IS ITS
EXECUTION.**

– UNITED STATES ARMY